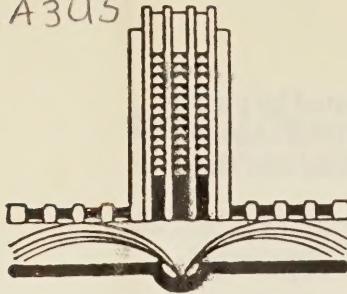


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DRIED FLOWERS



As evidenced by the discovery of preserved flowers in ancient Egyptian tombs, people have for centuries engaged in the art of preserving flowers. Today, a large variety of annuals, biennials and perennials are successfully preserved. Because properly dried flowers can persist for years after harvesting, they are often referred to as everlasting or immortelles.

To ascertain the optimum growing conditions and harvesting time for a particular species, one should not rely solely on books or articles. Experienced growers will frequently be the best sources of information. In general, flowering plants require ample sunlight, good drainage and a growing season with a minimum of 80 days. Harvesting flowers at the appropriate time is critical. Flowers which are without blemishes, insects or diseases should be picked on mornings of low humidity after the dew has evaporated from the petals.

Several techniques can be utilized to remove moisture from the collected flowers. The simplest method is to tie a rubber band around a bunch of flowers after their leaves have been removed, and to hang them upside down out of direct sunlight in a dry, well-ventilated attic, closet or garage. Ideally, the drying area should have a temperature between 60° and 80° F and a humidity rate less than 60%. Another method is to place the flowers in a container and to cover them with clean, fine sand, or a mixture of borax and cornmeal, or a nonchlorophyll kitty litter. These inexpensive substances provide the flowers with support, enabling them to maintain their shape while they dry naturally.

A more costly method is to use an airtight container and to cover the flowers with silica gel, a desiccant, which not only provides support to the flowers but also removes moisture from them. Overall, the more rapidly flowers dry, the less likely they are to become moldy and

the more vivid their colors remain. The drying process can be further accelerated by placing the container in a microwave oven or by applying heat. Depending on the method chosen and the particular plant material being preserved, drying time may take between one and four weeks.

The uses of preserved flowers are limited only by one's imagination. They are popular in floral arrangements, wreaths, bouquets, potpourri and corsages.

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ASSOCIATIONS, ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES

American Floral Marketing Council. c/o Society of American Florists, 1601 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. (703) 836-8700.

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers. 155 Elm Street, Oberlin, OH 44074. (216) 774-2887.

Color Association of the United States. 343 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10016. (212) 683-9531.

Floral Marketing Division, Produce Marketing Association. 1500 Casho Mill Road, P.O. Box 6036, Newark, DE 19714. (302) 738-7100.

Florists' Transworld Delivery Association. 29200 Northwestern Highway, Southfield, MI 48037. (313) 355-9300.

Society of American Florists, 1601 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. (703) 836-8700.

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